



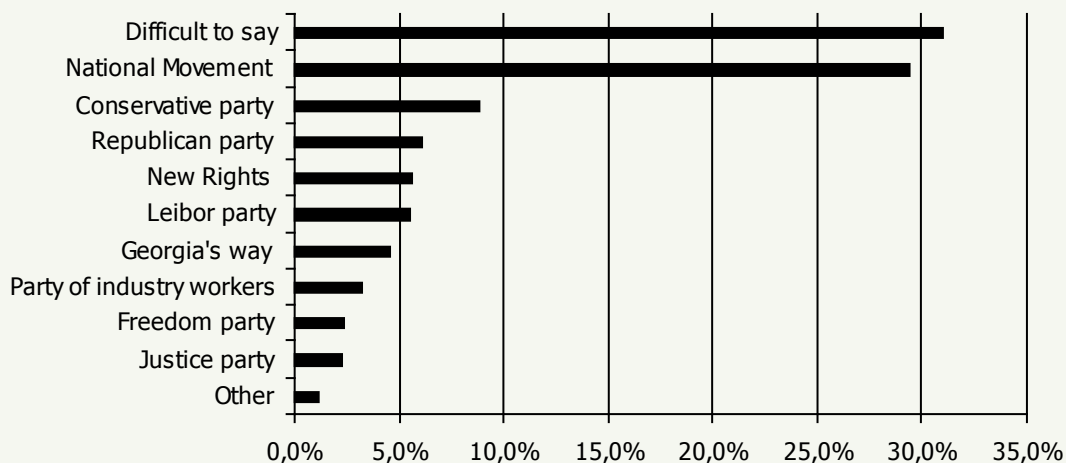
Barometer 2006: Internal policy and the electorate in Georgia

Institute for Policy Studies¹

This representative survey of the population of Georgia was carried out in June 15-28, 2006 in all nine regions of the country, Ajara and the capital Tbilisi. 1171 persons were surveyed (53.6% females and 46.4% males, 91.9% of which were ethnic Georgians, 3.8% Azeri, 2.4% Armenian and 1.9% of other ethnicity. Among the surveyed 35.8% are 17-34 years old, 44.5% 35-54 years old and 19.7% are 55 and more. Below are presented a selection of the results that concern internal policy.

In terms of voting preferences, the biggest share of respondents (31.0%) could not give definite answer to question as which party they would vote for in case of Parliamentary elections. Among the different parties, the National Movement has the largest number of supporters (29.4%).

Graph 1: Support of the parties

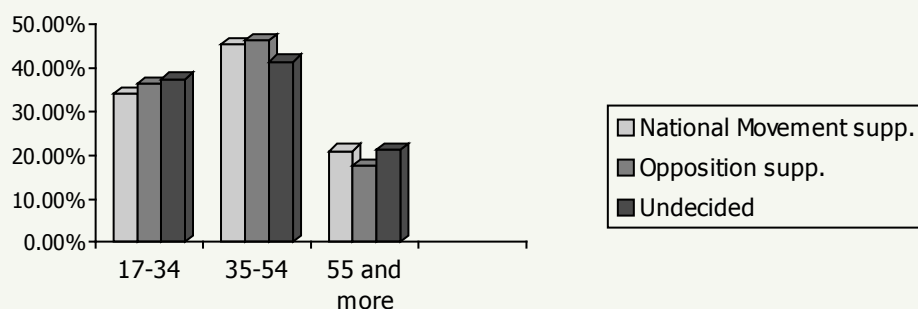


For analysis of the data we grouped respondents according to party support in the following way:

1.Supporters of National Movement	29.4%
2.Supporters of all opposition parties	39.6%
3.Undecided	31.0%

¹ The survey was supported by Open Society Institute. The Institute for Policy Studies is a Non-Government Organization focused on the study of social policy. Information on the activities of the institute are on www.ips.ge

The distribution of supporters across the age is presented in Graph 2



The supporters of the National Movement and the opposition parties do not differ by gender. On average, their supporters are 48.0% men and 52.0% women. Among the undecided group, women prevail (57.0%). Ethnic Georgians comprise 90.4% of the supporters of the National Movement, 96.1% of opposition supporters and 88.1% of Undecided. Supporters of the National Movement are better well-off than the other two groups - 72.5% of them estimate their own household as being of moderate affluence, while such household estimates give 64.0% of Opposition supporters and 63.8% of Undecided. Economic well-being is mostly determined by the number of employed household members and the income from own business. The difference between the supporters of the parties and the Undecided is statistically significant on a majority of issues, which is why in many instances, in addition to the actual results, we offer analysis for the answers given by these three groups.

Democratic principles and readiness to vote

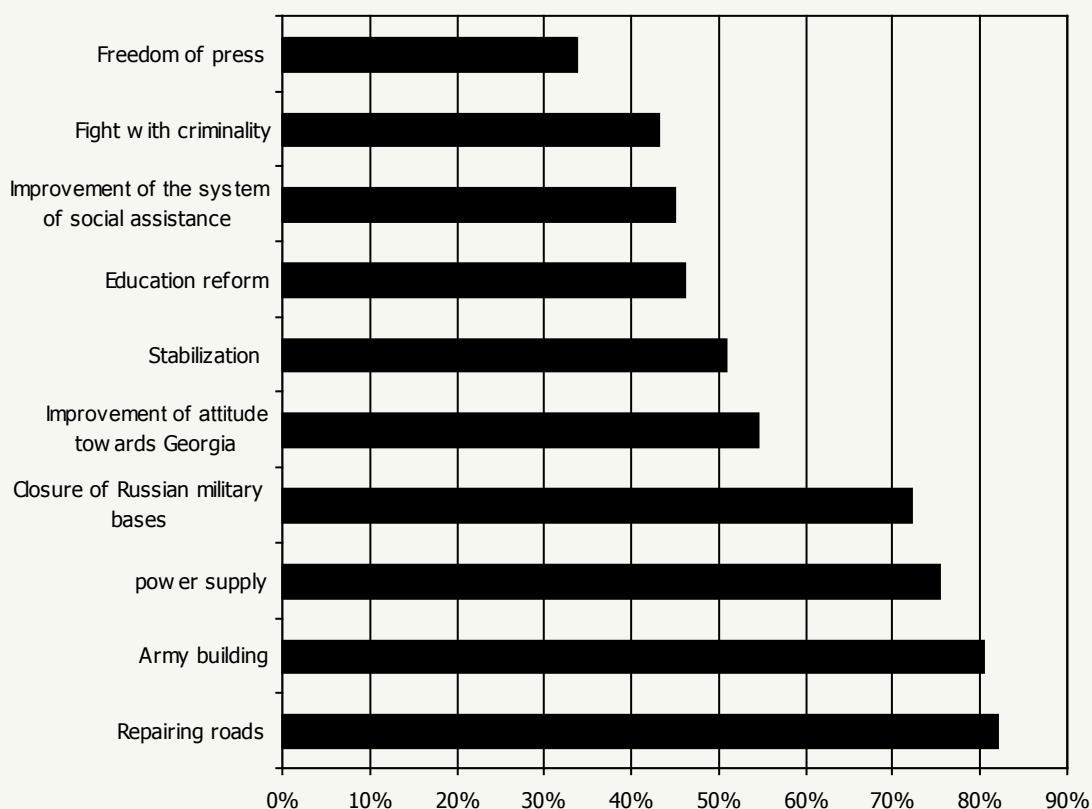
The majority (51.7%) thinks that there is no democracy in Georgia. This belief is held by 31.8% of National Movement supporters, 67.2% of supporters of opposition parties and 51.2% of the Undecided group. A clear majority (70.9%) believe that one of the main indicators of democratic rule -Equality before the law, is not respected in Georgia. A large portion of respondents (63.8%) believe that public participation is a necessary condition for the solution of problems the country faces, but according to 77.0% of those asked, ordinary citizen are unable to have any influence over the actions of government. Correspondingly, many (64.7%) think that people in power disregard public opinion and a majority of the population cannot see ways to influence the government. Participation in Non-Government Organizations (26.8%), appealing to local authorities (20.8%) and strike (19.2%) are seen as the most effective ways of influencing government.

A majority of those surveyed (62.9%) plan to take part in local elections. This is the case for 79.8% of National Movement supporters, 60.9% of supporters of opposition parties and 49.4% of Undecided. Only 28.2% of the population believes that the elections will be fair, although expectation of fair elections is much greater among National Movement supporters (54.3%), than either of the Opposition parties supporters (17.7%) or the Undecided (17.6%).

Estimations of the activities of government, problems of the country and possible threats

Repairing the roads (82.0%), army building (80.3%), power supply (75.4%) are considered as the most effective actions of the government, while as the most ineffective are considered overcoming poverty (63.5%), improvement of economic condition in the country (50.3%) and support of small business (44.1%).

Graph 3: Successful government activities



The identification of the main problems facing the country is connected with the failures of governing. Poverty (81.6%), relations with Russia (68.2%), Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts (60.1%) and the decrease in the population (37.3%) are estimated as the main problems. All three groups of respondents prioritize these five problems, although they rank their importance differently, for example, poverty is named as the number one problem by all, whereas National Movement supporters name conflicts as second in importance as opposed to the supporters of the Opposition parties and the Undecided group who place relations with Russia in second place.

Poverty is conceived not only as the most acute problem, and the struggle against it the government's biggest failure, but also as the largest future threat. The majority (73.7%) expects poverty to increase in the next 5 years. A large portion (69.5%) fears the wider spread of such diseases as AIDS, tuberculosis and cancer. There is also a significant fear of losing many of Georgia's traditions (62.8%). On the whole, the supporters of the opposition parties are more concerned with these threats than supporters of National Movement or the Undecided.

Increasing salaries and pensions (74.6%), improving Georgian-Russian relations (55.3%), and changing the government (33.4%) are seen as the most effective ways for improving the situation in Georgia. The groups of supporters do not differ in pointing the first two means for improving situation, the difference is in what they consider for third place. For National Movement supporters it is the demand of withdrawal of Russian peace-keepers, for Opposition supporters and Undecided it is the change in government.

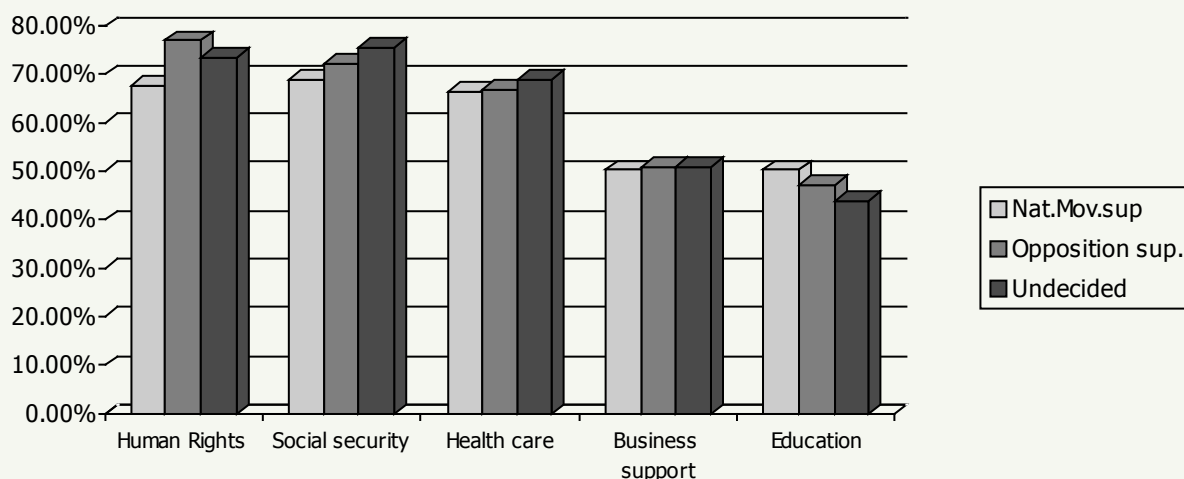
Among recent activities of the government, the organization of youth camps (69.3%), the introduction of a new system of social security which provides assistance to the poorest (59.0%) and the reform of universities and research institutes (33.6%) are considered as the most successful. As the most unsuccessful are named investigation and court proceedings of Girgvlani case (64.2%), dealing with prison unrest (61.0%) and the issue of leasing forests for 50 years (58.2%)

Unemployment (82.4%), drug addiction (41.8%), availability of quality education (40.6%), condition of roads (36.0%) and emigration (34.1%) are seen by the population as the most acute local problems.

Values

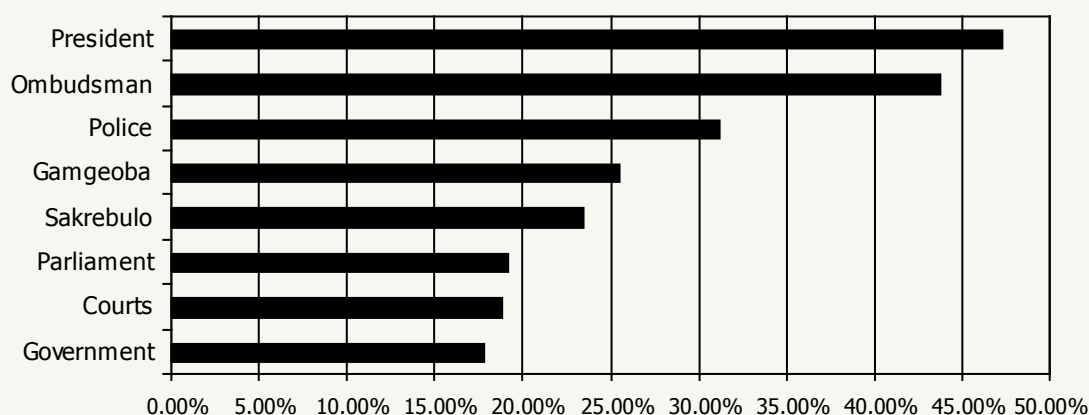
17 respondents were requested to choose from a list which spheres or domains were the most important for the country. The majority chose the following: Defense of Human Rights (72.9%), social security (72.3%), Health care (67.5%), support of business (50.7%) and education (47.1%).

Graph 4: Important spheres



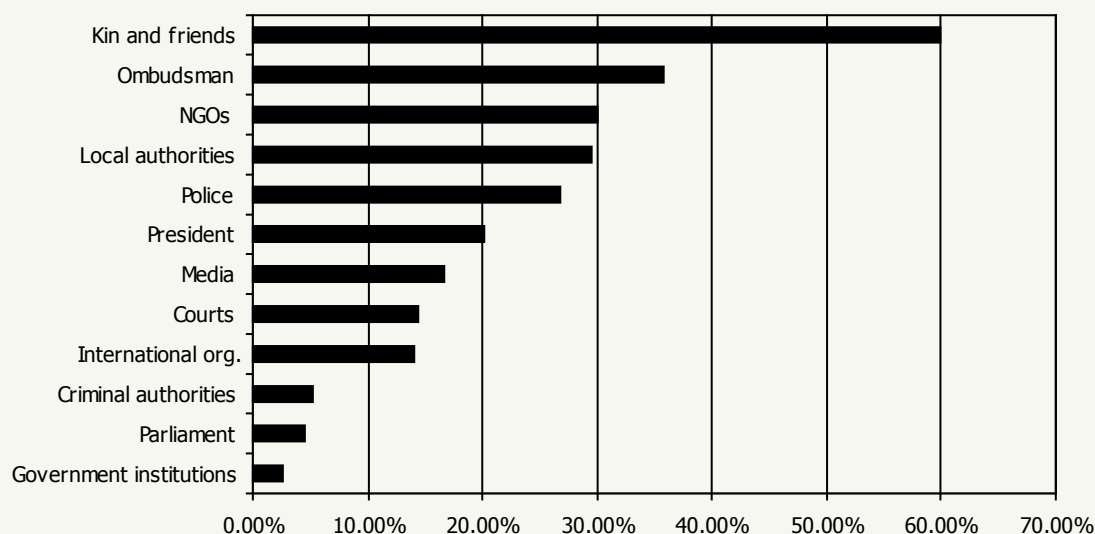
Trust and optimism

Trust in state institutions is rather low, no state institution can claim the trust from at least half of the population. The biggest share trusts the President (47.3%), whilst the smallest has trust in the government (17.8%).



The deficiency of trust in state institutions is reflected in the naming of persons or institutions who respondents would consider approaching in case of the violation of their rights. The majority of respondents (60.0%) choose kin and friends, followed by the Ombudsman (35.8%) and then NGOs (30.1%).

Graph 6: Trust in persons and institutions



The majority of those surveyed (55.1%) did not believe that it is possible to lead a decent life by honest work in Georgia. This view is held by 53.3% of National Movement supporters, 63.4% of Opposition supporters and 55.6% of the Undecided group. Almost one half of the population (49.3%) believe that they have not found their own place in life. Not only do people mistrust state institutions and doubt the possibility of leading a decent life by honest work in Georgia, but more than one half of those surveyed also (55.5%) believes that the majority of people cannot be trusted.

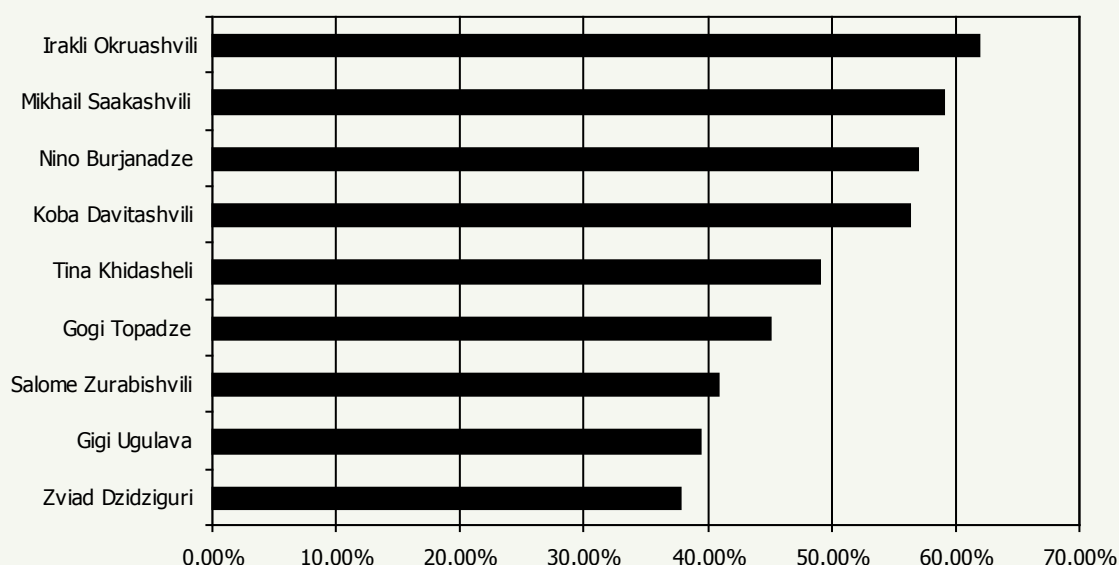
One third of the population (39.7%) believes that the country is on the right path to development, 31.5% does not think so, and 29.2% cannot make definite estimation. This view is shared by many more (66.3%) supporters of the National Movement, than either the Opposition party supporters (29.0%), or the Undecided group (28.6%).

Notwithstanding all the above, a majority (56.5%) is convinced, that what one achieves in life depends more on herself or himself than on others and situation. Optimism is a dominant attitude, as 88.5% looks at future with hope and 55.4% expects that most of the things in their life will happen as they wish.

Estimations of politicians

The respondents estimated politicians from a presented list. They were requested to choose one answer option from provided four options: like, dislike, difficult to say, does not know. The list consisted of 28 politicians from whom 13 represent opposition parties. The most favorably estimated are the Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili (62.0%), President Mikhail Saakashvili (59.0%) and the Speaker of Parliament, Nino Burjanadze (57.0%).

Graph 7: Top Ten regarded politicians

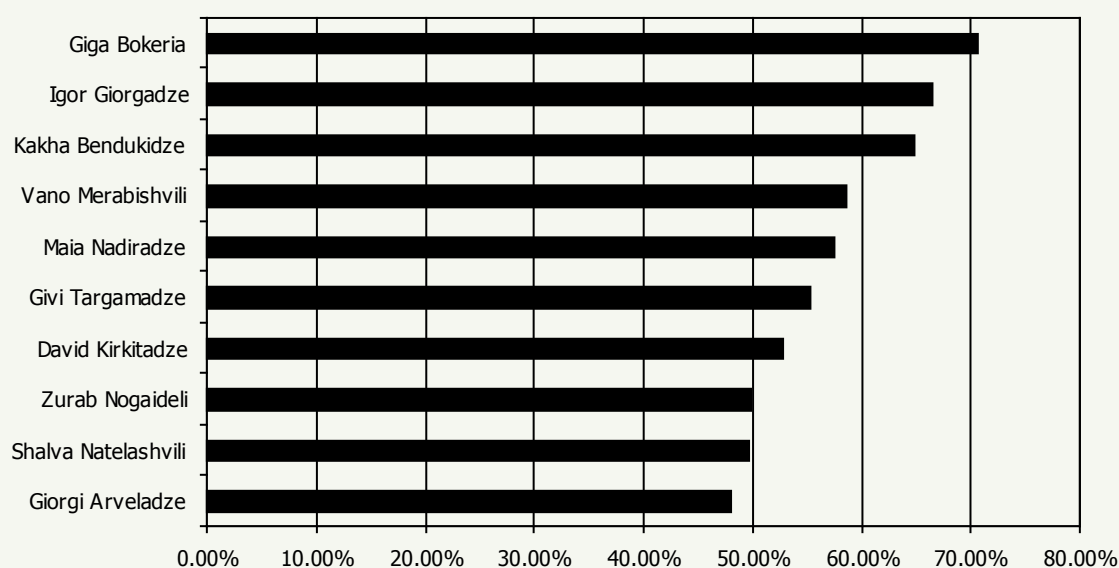


It is not at all surprising that the ranking of politicians by three groups of party supporters differs. On the whole National Movement supporters are positive about Saakashvili, Okruashvili, Burjanadze, Ugulava, Davitashvili, Levan Berdzenishvili, Topadze, Lomaia, Khidasheli and Salome Zurabishvili. The preference list of the Supporters of opposition is as follows: Davitashvili, Levan Berdzenishvili, Khidasheli, Okruashvili, Salome Zurabishvili, Dzidziguri, Topadze, Chikradze, Natelashvili and Usupashvili. The Undecided group have the highest regard for Saakashvili, Okruashvili, Levan Berdzenishvili, Burjanadze, Davitashvili, Khidasheli, Topadze, Salome Zurabishvili, Dzidziguri and Ugulava.

National Movement supporters are much more lavish than others in expressing their preferences especially the Undecided, who are the most critical. It is interesting to note that representatives of the opposition can be found among all three groups of supporters - in the group of National Movement supporters there are 5 opposition politicians, among supporters of opposition parties 9, and in the group of Undecided 7.

The list of least liked politicians is headed by Giga Bokeria (disliked by 70.6%), Igor Giorgadze (66.5%) and Kakha Bendukidze (64.8%).

Graph 8: Least liked politicians



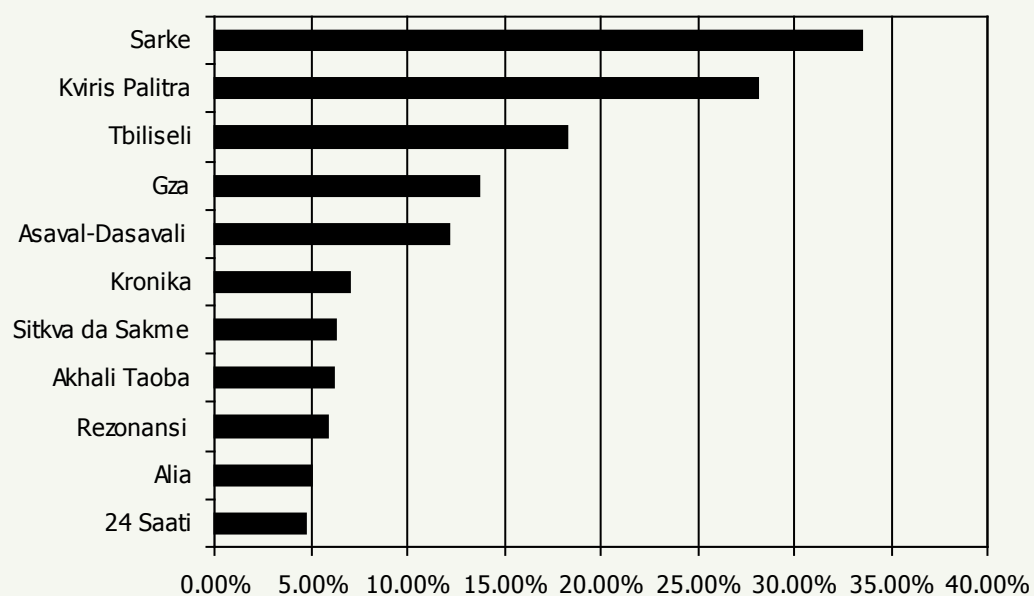
National Movement supporters dislike the following politicians the most: Giorgadze, Natelashvili, Bokeria, Bendukidze, Gamkrelidze, Chikradze, Gamsakhurdia, Kirkitadze, Nadiradze and Merabishvili. Supporters of the opposition dislike: Bokeria, Bendukidze, Merabishvili, Targamadze, nadiradze, Giorgadze, Nogaideli, Kirkitadze, Arveladze and Lomaia. For the Undecided the least liked are: Bokeria, Giorgadze, Bendukidze, Nadiradze, Targamadze, Kirkitadze, Nogaideli, Natelashvili, Arveladze and Lomaia. In this case too, party support does not unequivocally determine preferences. In the list of 10 the most disliked politicians of National Movement supporters 5, in the list of the supporters of opposition 9, in the list of Undecided 8 are members of National Movement.

Media

Television undoubtedly remains the primary source for information. 85.7% get their information from television, 16.8% from printed media and only 2.6% from radio. Channel "Imedi" information programs have the biggest audience being watched by 87.0% of population. They are trusted also by the largest number - 80.7%. News and information programs from Rustavi 2 are watched by a slightly smaller number (76.9%), but are trusted much less number (59.9%). Public Television is watched by 32.5% and is trusted by 21.9%, news and information programs of different Russian channels are watched by 22.5% and are trusted by 19.8%, Mze is watched by 19.2% and trusted by 9.4%. The news and information programs of Public Television and Rustavi 2 are more trusted by the supporters of National Movement than members of other two groups. Public Television is trusted by 35.2% of National Movement supporters, 15.3% of supporters of Opposition parties and 18.2% of Undecided. Rustavi 2 is trusted by 75.3% of National Movement supporters, 53.0% of supporters of opposition parties and 53.8% of Undecided.

Besides news and information programs "Imedi" is also top in most regarded and watched political programs. At the top of the list are two programs of the channel – "Reactia" (Reaction) liked by 71.1% and "Pirvelebi" (The Firsts), liked by 64.5%. Among the journals the most popular is "Sarke" with 3.5% of respondents reported reading it in the week preceding the survey. Among the weeklies "Kviris Palitra" (28.1%) enjoys most popularity whilst "Akhali Taoba" (6.2%) enjoys most popularity amongst the dailies.

Graph 9: Printed media



The Institute for Policy Studies hopes that the above provided information will be of assistance to the parties in their forthcoming election campaign and those wishing to know more about the contemporary situation in Georgia.